

Asthma and Schools

Asthma is a long-term respiratory condition that intermittently inflames and narrows the airways in the lungs. Symptoms include wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, and coughing. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and can happen rarely or every day. It is a condition can affect people of all ages and often starts during childhood.

Indoor allergens and irritants may play a significant role in triggering asthma episodes. Students with uncontrolled asthma often miss more school and have poorer academic performance than healthy students. Effectively managing asthma is a combination of medical management of the disease and the avoidance of environmental triggers. It is important for schools to reduce environmental irritants because students spend most of their time in school buildings.

Common Asthma Triggers Found in Schools

Environmental Asthma Trigger Found in Schools	Asthma Management Tip for Schools
Tobacco Smoke	Enforce no-smoking policies in schools
Pests	Use Integrated Pest Management
Mold	Fix leaks and moisture problems Dry wet areas within 24-48 to prevent mold Clean hard, moldy surfaces with water and detergent and dry
Dust Mites	Dust and vacuumed thoroughly and regular Keep classrooms free of clutter Wash stuffed toys
Animal Dander	Remove animals from classrooms Keep animals away from sensitive students and ventilation

Other asthma triggers that can be found in schools include cleaning products, pesticides, and school bus exhaust. More information about controlling these environmental triggers can be in other sections of this manual.

Resources:

- CDC Asthma: <https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm>
- CDC School and Childcare Providers: <https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/schools.html>
- EPA Managing Asthma in the School Environment: <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/managing-asthma-school-environment>
- EPA Framework for Effective School Indoor Air Quality Management: [Framework for Effective School IAQ Management | Creating Healthy Indoor Air Quality in Schools | US EPA](#)

- ALA Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative Toolkit: <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/asthma/asthma-education-advocacy/asthma-friendly-schools-initiative/toolkit/>